

MATSUI WELCOMES FUNDING FOR SACRAMENTO IN LONG-AWAITED TRANSPORTATION BILL

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Washington, DC – Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) issued the following statement in support of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which authorizes the future direction, scope, and funding level of federal transit programs through September 2009. The previous authorization, Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), expired October 1, 2003.

“While transportation is critical to this nation, I think that often its impact is overlooked. And the Transportation Authorization legislation we discuss today will truly influence our lives, not only in terms of improvements to our roads, a connection to our family and friends, reduction of congestion and air pollution – but also in terms of jobs. We all know there is no better economic stimulus for our nation and our families.

“Because of the implications of this legislation, I was proud that my first vote as a Member of Congress was for the Transportation Authorization bill and I will be pleased to vote in favor of this much-anticipated legislation today.

“California’s infrastructure sorely needs this influx of dollars. Unfortunately, our roads are some of the worst in the nation. This results in increased maintenance costs for our vehicles and compromised safety. And nothing can be more important than ensuring that our roads are safe, especially in California as we see the number of people continue to multiply.

“So many of our communities are experiencing unprecedented growth — my own hometown of Sacramento is the third fastest growing area in California. And this bill clearly recognizes growth is upon us and how we grow is incredibly important. And we know responsible and environmentally friendly development will have a multiplier affect — promoting jobs, growing business sales, increasing property values, and improving the quality of life in our communities.

“I cannot emphasize how important quality of life is. We already have so much pressure on our time. And when I hear that drivers are spending over 30 hours a year sitting in traffic—that’s time that could be spent with your family, on the job or just relaxing. That wasted time, extra fuel and lost productivity is at a cost of \$830 million every year, which is equivalent to a \$600 tax on each Sacramentan. That has real consequences for everyone in our community and across America.

“But wisely this legislation promotes alternative means of transportation — with an emphasis in Sacramento on expanded bus service and light-rail. Yes, this reduces congestion by minimizing the number of cars on the roads and bringing more people to our downtown businesses, but it is also about ensuring our senior citizens — who may not feel comfortable driving — can still maintain their personal independence and mobility. Being able to make that trip to the grocery store or to the mall can still be a regular part of their lives.

“Further by increasing transit and natural gas bus fleets, we are also helping to decrease the suffocating pollution caused by vehicle emissions. Sadly, Sacramento’s air quality is the sixth worse in entire nation — and we must do everything to improve, not only Sacramento’s air quality, but the air quality across the nation. I can not minimize the importance of this — the quality of the air we breathe has a profound effect on our health, particularly the health our children, where we continue to see more and more kids develop asthma.

“I am grateful we will pass this legislation today, although I will add that we have waited too long to do so. Through this legislation we will make an incredibly important investment in our communities that will have a profound long-term effect.”

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